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that spreads veritable wings, but not, like the flying fish, to beat therewith the air.

The star fish and sea urchins of our waters present us with shapes and patterns by no means to be despised, but other waters are even more lavish of lowly animals of this type whose structure is exquisite in composition and whose colors are often strikingly fine. Some are shaped like a cross, like a Y, like a shield, like a combination of five serpents, like a butterfly with outspread wings. The old questions force themselves on us—why are these colors and forms poured forth? who sees them? for whom this hidden beauty? have they been waiting myriads of years for us? and if not, are there other eyes than ours who do see and approve and enjoy them? Fabre in his lifelong devotion to the ways of insects kept running against such unanswered problems. Beauty in the depths of ocean and land is as insoluble a problem as that of the "instinct" which guides the creatures that cannot possibly think along our lines of reason.

#### WONDERS OF COLOR AND FORM

Marvels increase as we descend the scale of being in the ocean as on the land. Here are the sponges and six-ray corals, the sea-tangs and crinoids near the borders between animal and vegetable. What graceful stalks and fronds and lily shapes, what splendid domes of dazzling white, what picturesque branches of pink and red! And among the minute life in the sea, what an endless treasure of intricate yet stately shapes—hats and helmets and pierced-work tiaras, purse and box and halo—patterns that a hundred silversmiths might draw from without exhausting the models—basket and flower-holder,

cup and bowl, leaf and spiral and umbrella, vase and platter; wall-decorations novel in pattern and line, novel in color combinations for tilework and screen—these in endless profusion are revealed to the seeker after beauty; yet are they things on a plane of existence not greatly if at all higher than that of the sensitive plant!

Professor Ernst Hæckel has figured some of them in *Kunst-formen der Natur* (Leipzig 1899) and others will be found in the magazines of scientific societies. Their colors are not less marvelous than their patterns. One thinks of the designs that hoarfrost and snowflakes assume, of crystals, of constellations, of charted shapes in geometry. Forms there are: of sphere within sphere, like the ivory puzzle-balls of the Chinese—how the devil, one thinks, did they get the one openwork, filigree ball inside the other? Moving jellies of no small size belonging to the disklike Medusæ are similar to a basket of flowers or rather an inverted basket formed of flowers, pink and red and blue and lilac. Others are golden, others green, others white—like congealed moonlight. Some suggest bells and are called *campanaria*; another, and a very voracious one, is like a Persian cap with fine red lines on a pink ground.

Thus the visible and microscopic life of the sea presents an almost infinite variety of objects for man to choose from. Is it not a singular thing that artists do not avail themselves of the goods brought to their doors? It makes one think that the mere pursuit of technique has a withering effect on man's brain. By the time he learns to handle brush, chisel or burin he has lost his keen eyes for beauty—and contents himself thereafter with following the paths beaten into highways by those who went before.

Charles de Kay

## THE ARTIST'S PRETEXT

By PAI-TA-SHUN

I would not paint a face  
Or rocks or streams or trees  
Mere semblances of things—  
But something more than these.

I would not play a tune  
Upon the sheng or lute  
Which did not also sing  
Meanings that else were mute.

The art is best which gives  
To the soul's range no bound;  
Something beside the form,  
Something beyond the sound.

From "Chinese Lyrics" of Pai-Ta-Shun.  
New York: Scribner's.

